

THE
EVANGELICAL WITNESS.

VOL. IV.

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NO. II.

QUESTIONS FOR THE EVANGELICAL WITNESS.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32.)

Q. 4th. What is the meaning of Luke, xxii. 36? "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." Does it not seem to contradict Mat. xxvi. 52? "For all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

A. We have heard a Hopkinsian quote the former of these texts to prove that God not only is the author of sin, but that he commands it; at the same time referring to the following verse; "He was numbered among the transgressors," i. e. his disciples who would be transgressors in using the sword. To mention this is enough to refute it, for the essence of transgression is disobedience to the divine command. If Christ had literally commanded the buying and the use of swords, the disciples would have transgressed had they done otherwise.

Christ here uses the allegorical mode of teaching. Let him that is not prepared for spiritual conflict, now prepare himself, by furnishing himself with "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." "They said unto him Lord here are two swords, and he said unto them it is enough."

ALPHABETICAL WRITING AND PRINTING.

Anniversary Address, read before the Walden Library Association, January 31, 1826, by the Rev. James R. Willson, patron of the Institution.

Met to celebrate the first anniversary of an association, instituted for the diffusion of useful knowledge, by books, you will permit me to direct your attention in this address to the origin, progress and uses of alphabetical writing and printing. In doing this, there will be laid before you a brief outline of the business of book-making. Language itself is so abstruse and important, that it is generally thought to have been an immediate gift of inspiration. This sentiment is not altogether accurate. When Adam, in the garden of Eden, gave names to the various ranks of animals, he laid the basis, on which the stupendous superstructure of all languages has since been reared. Next in importance to the art of communicating thought by words, was the analysis of the vocables into their elementary sounds, and the representation of these elements by the letters of the alphabet. If this discovery was made at an early period after the origin of language, it certainly did not come into general use, for many ages after. Some mode of perpetuating the knowledge of important human discoveries and transactions, by permanent sensible signs, appears to be almost indispensable in the business of social life, and in the affairs of religion. Partly for this purpose, sacrifices were instituted, immediately after the revelation of the first promise, and were to be offered for a long series of ages. The rainbow was made the sign of the covenant of Noah, and circumcision of the Abrahamic covenant. When the Lord renewed the covenant of Abraham, with Jacob, in Bethel, that patriarch

erected a stone pillar, in commemoration of the transaction. The memory of the treaty between Jacob and Laban, was preserved by a similar record. To this origin we trace the erection of trophies of victory on the battle grounds where victory has been obtained over an enemy. On such monuments, were afterwards inscribed significant emblems, or hieroglyphical representations, which were themselves an improvement on a more ancient practice of making literal and rude pictures of sensible objects. Of this we have an example in the case of the Mexicans, who when the ships of Columbus arrived on the coast of our continent, sketched rude drawings of the men, and foreign vessels, and sent them into the interior for the purpose of conveying intelligence of the strange events, to their sovereign.

The information recorded and communicated by such literal figures, must always be very limited, and the transition from their use to symbolical painting is easy and almost unavoidable. In this manner originated the art of hieroglyphical writing, which made great progress, was extensively used among the more polished nations of antiquity, and was advanced to perhaps the highest attainable perfection in Egypt, the seat of ancient science. A serpent was the symbol of wisdom; a dove of innocence; a circle of eternity; a fly of impertinence; an eagle of perspicacity and elevation of thought, &c. Parts of these animals, and other sensible objects, as the paw of the lion, and the head of the serpent, and many symbols were grouped together in one figure, and thus an approximation was made to alphabetical writing. The Egyptian obelisks, and the walls of their temples were covered with these hieroglyphics, which few, except the priests, could decypher. In this way the written language of China, and of the other

nations of southeastern Asia, seems to have grown up to its present state, in which every word is represented by a distinct written or printed sign, appropriated to itself. We still use hieroglyphics to some extent, as in the devices of seals in public offices, in national arms, as the American eagle, &c.

I have said that in the hieroglyphics of Egypt, some approximation was made to alphabetical writing; but still, as it must appear to one who understands the powers of the human mind and its capacities of discovery, there was a gulph between them, impassable to the invention of man.—They seem to understand this subject best, who refer the origin of the alphabet to the immediate inspiration and gift of Heaven, and fix the time of its revelation at the writing of the ten commandments on two tables of stone, by the finger of God on Mount Sinai, where they were delivered to Moses. This opinion is thought to be well supported by many forcible arguments, as

1. It is inconceivable that the revelation of the way of salvation through the seed of the woman, who was to bruise the head of the serpent, while his own heel should be bruised, and thus sinners redeemed by his death, should never have been committed to writing by alphabetical characters, until the time of Moses, had that facile method of record been known before the giving of the ten commandments. It has been alledged, we are aware, that such a record was made antecedent to that era, but without any well authenticated evidence. That the first chapters of Genesis appear to record several distinct documents which existed before they were written out by Moses, is true; but their transmission by tradition was possible, which was the case, as we shall presently see, in relation to other ancient compositions.—

One document might have been composed by Adam, another by Enoch, and another by Noah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and treasured up in the memories of good men, in the successive generations, and thus transmitted to posterity. Besides we have the consent of all antiquity that the portions of the Holy Scriptures given to men in those remote ages, were conveyed from one generation to another in the traditional way. Had such a writing existed, it is hardly possible that none of the Patriarchs before the exodus from Egypt, should ever allude to it, as they often do to God's covenant but without ever referring to a book. After the time of Moses, such references are constantly made. It is evident from these considerations, that it did not exist; "and still far more evident" that it would have existed had alphabetical writing been known at that early age.

2. Where would have been the necessity, that the two tables should be written by the finger of God, had Moses learned this art among the Egyptians, where he certainly would have learned it had it been possessed by them? The other portions of Scripture were not written by the finger of God, but by amanuenses chosen from among men, and inspired for the purpose. Why would not Moses have been employed in this manner, as he was to write the other parts of the five books ascribed to him, and as other inspired men who wrote the books of the Bible, had he been already instructed in this art? Was it not a part of the work in which Moses was employed during forty days in the mount with God, to learn letters and familiarize himself with the nature of this sublime and wonderful discovery? May not a great part of his time have been occupied in writing down from the mouth of Jehovah, those laws, which on his

descent he delivered to the congregation of Israel, and thus prepare him to become the instructor of all succeeding ages ?

3d. The extensive and minute detail of the laws then promulged, particularly of the Jewish ritual, compared with the conciseness and simplicity of all former revelations, rendered that era peculiarly appropriate for making such a communication to the church, the memory of man not being sufficient to retain them all with accuracy, as it had been for the preservation of a preceding revelation. The amplification of divinely revealed truth, law and order, seemed at that time to require a corresponding enlargement of the circle of literature.

4. There does not exist any book in alphabetical writing, antecedent to the time of Moses, nor so much as a solitary inscription on any tomb, on any pillar, on any temple, or on any monument. This is the more remarkable as the arts of sculpture and architecture, had before that time attained to very high degrees of perfection. Aaron understood the art of casting and adorning with the chisel of the engraver, statuary of gold, before he made the golden calf. Other products of ancient artists, also evince this. Is it not incredible, that during two thousand five hundred years that preceded the age of Moses from the creation of the world, and with all the curious and important discoveries of learned men in more than thirty generations, not so much as one solitary word in alphabetical writing, engraven on rock or metal has escaped the ravages of time, and come down to us, bearing testimony to later ages of the antiquity of this art ? What greatly fortifies this argument is, that Moses does not mention it as known before this time, nor are letters alluded to by any known heathen writers as in existence be-

fore this date. The Iliad and the Odysey of Homer, the Theogeny, and the Works and Lays of Hesiod, were composed comparatively a short time before Moses, and yet like the poems of Ossian in Scotland, they were not written by their authors, but transmitted by tradition only, to be written out after the giving of the law at Sinai. It is a good rule not to affirm the existence of any fact, until we have evidence that it did exist. We have evidence that alphabetical writing existed at the time of Moses; none of its prior existence.

5th. The preceding argument is much strengthened by the fact that, soon after the writing of the two tables, letters made their appearance in the heathen world, and in the neighborhood of Judea. In the time of Joshua, Moses' successor, Cadmus is said by Greek writers to have brought the alphabet into Greece from Phenicia. During forty years, after the giving of the law at Sinai, the journeyings of the Israelites in the desert of Arabia, in a great measure secluded them from the society of eastern nations; but within less than seven years after the passage of the Jordan, we find neighboring kingdoms in possession of the alphabet. Phenicia, whence Cadmus transported letters into Greece, was bounded on the east by the tribe of Ashur, on the west by the Mediterranean sea; and the passage from Tyre, the capital of Phenicia, across the Egean sea, was short. The Phenicians were a commercial and enterprising, and consequently a shrewd and intelligent people. They could not long remain ignorant of the literature of the Ashurites, their neighbors, or of the Israelites along the sea coast, on the south of them, which their ships had long been accustomed to visit. At every port after the conquest of Canaan, by Joshua, they would find the people to whom Moses had given the law. On

that coast bordered the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Manassah, Ephraim and Issachar. Whatever discoveries they made on any of these quarters, would soon travel into Greece, as an active commerce was carried on between the two countries, which accounts for the speedy transmission of the alphabet from Canaan, to Attica. It is true that Phenicia, had an extensive commercial intercourse with Egypt, and it may be said that letters were brought from that country and not from Canaan. But if Moses, as some contend, learned this art in Egypt, and it had been known there for many ages, why did it not sooner find its way into Greece? Phenicia could not have remained long ignorant of so important a branch of knowledge, if possessed by Egypt; and from Phenicia, it must soon have become known in Greece. The forty years that intervened, between the departure of the Hebrews from Egypt and their settlement in Canaan, under Joshua, would have been more than sufficient for this purpose. We may, then, safely infer, that it was not known in Egypt at the time of the exodus, and if not in Egypt, at that time the most learned of all her contemporaries, it must have been unknown in all kingdoms.— Very soon after the Greeks had learned the alphabet, the songs of Homer and Hesiod, were committed to writing, and other poets and prose writers composed and wrote songs and other compositions, which have come down to our own times.— In a short time after the Israelites entered into the promised land, Sanconiathon and Manetho, among the Phenicians, wrote philosophical books, which, though they have perished in the ruins of time, are yet proved by subsequent writers to have existed. Soon after the Mosaic age, inscriptions in alphabetical characters on the monuments of antiquity become numerous and well authenticated. All these

arguments taken together form an array of testimony which, if I am not mistaken, prove irrefragably that alphabetical writing was unknown until the time of Moses, and that he was taught it by divine inspiration, at the giving of the ten commandments.

But it is objected that the words "book" and "write, occur in Exodus before the writing of the two tables, Ex. xvii. 14. "And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." To this it may be answered: That the original word *cheteb*, translated *write*, may apply to hieroglyphical writing, and was no doubt so applied before the knowledge of the letters of the alphabet; and that the original *seper*, translated book, may apply to a hieroglyphical record. 2. Though the battle was fought with Amalek, before the giving of the law, yet the command to write the record of the transaction may have been posterior to that event.— This is rendered very probable from the circumstance that Moses is commanded to rehearse it not in the ears of all the people, but only in the ears of Joshua, for his use afterwards, when he would lead the people in their wars against the heathen—to destroy utterly the Amalekites, as the seven nations of Canaan were to be destroyed. Either of these answers is sufficient to remove entirely the objection. We may add, 3. Though the command was given immediately after the event of the battle, yet Moses in recording it may have used words taken from the discovery afterwards made, before he put it on record; as Laish is called Dan in the narrative of Abraham's battle with the northern kings, though it was not known by that name for many ages after Abraham's victory.

Again it is objected that all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are not in the decalogue. I con-

sider this objection erroneous. It is true that the Hebrew letter *teth* is not in the ten commandments, and it is the only one of the present letters of the Hebrew alphabet that is wanting. But *teth* is a double letter, equivalent to *th*, and seems to be a combination of *tau*, the last letter of the alphabet, and *yod*, as both the inspection of the form of the letters, and their sound evince. We know that Simonides, who reduced the poems of Homer to writing, did add to the alphabet, many years after it was brought to Greece by Cadmus, three letters: and it is no objection to the fact of his introducing it into Greece, that more letters are now found in it than those which he introduced among the Greeks. Besides, we know that the forms of the Hebrew letters have undergone very considerable changes, and that they are not now of the same figure with those employed when the Old Testament was first written,

Thus, I trust, it has been made appear that God is, by immediate inspiration the author of this magnificent blessing to men. How fit that so wonderful an art should have been at first employed in recording the laws of the God of heaven by which the affairs of men are to be regulated in all the relations of human life! How often has it since been misapplied, and letters, the gift of heaven, made the vehicle of diffusing corruption through human society! How often debased by being made the instrument of iniquity! How generally are trampled under foot, those commandments, in the recording of which it was first consecrated! But in the end the good will incomparably outweigh the evil. This light kindled and illustrated in the glories of Sinai, has shed and will continue to shed its enlightening beams on the darkness of the human intellect, until all the dark

places of the earth shall be irradiated by its brightness.

The art of printing now claims our attention. For two thousand nine hundred and thirty one years, from the revelation of the art of alphabetical writing, until the discovery of that of printing, the only means of multiplying the copies of any book was by the pen—a laborious and comparatively tedious process. The substance on which the ancients wrote was usually parchment, an expensive article, and difficult to procure in quantities equal to the demand. The parchment rolls were indeed durable, but still liable to be defaced by time. The writings in these rolls or books, were exposed to destruction from another cause. When a book fell into the hands of one who could not appreciate its contents, and who had a disposition to write, he defaced the record, to make room for his own composition. Those parchments, which were thus written a second time, were called palimpsests, or re-written; and it is astonishing what ravages of the finest works of antiquity, were made by the monks in the dark ages. The most valuable philosophical, historical, and poetical records were effaced, and their place occupied by childish legends, composed in honor of real or imaginary saints, to amuse the ignorant. Some of these valuable works of ancient writers, that had been thought to be irrecoverably lost have been lately brought to light, and are found to be still legible, notwithstanding the attempts to deface them. But the fact that so valuable monuments of antiquity were destroyed in this manner, demonstrates how dear and rare parchments, suitable for writing were, which added to the cost of transcribing, rendered the price of books enormous. Before the discovery of the art of printing, even the humble collection of books which this in-

fant association has already made, would not have been within the reach of the most opulent citizen of this state. Persons of great wealth only could afford to buy books, while the treasures of knowledge were locked against all the poor and middling classes of society. I believe a single copy of the Bible has been sold as high as fifty guineas. Authors made their works known not by the multiplication of copies, but by reading them to public companies assembled for the purpose of hearing them. Thucydides and other Grecian writers of celebrity, read their works at the Olympian games, after which they were deposited in the archives of their authors, or of opulent purchasers, where they were accessible only to the favoured few. Virgil read his *Æneid* in the court of Augustus, in order to make it known. Under these circumstances very few of the professors of religion could have access to the reading of the Scriptures, and almost their only means of becoming acquainted with the contents of that blessed volume, was by hearing it read and expounded in the public services of the sanctuary. We may safely infer that however learned, a few may have been in the different ages, the great mass of the people were in a state of deplorable ignorance. The library which you have already collected, puts in your possession means of information, far beyond those of one in every thousand, in any nation, only three hundred and ninety years ago. He who buys, reads and understands one monthly journal, or one weekly newspaper, has more information respecting the present state of the world, in religion, politics, agriculture, the arts and sciences, than most ancient kings could possess.

The expense of procuring parchment rolls, was somewhat diminished by the use of the papyrus, a flag that grew in Egypt on the banks of the Nile.

which was used as a substitute. But it was usually employed in engrossing transactions of minor importance, as it was of a frail texture and soon destroyed by decay. It was not until the fifteenth century, that the art of making paper, which derived its name from the papyrus, was discovered. This was a very important invention, and paved the way for one much more illustrious, and fraught with consequences of the greatest magnitude—that of printing. So great is the simplicity of this art, we are astonished that it should have remained unknown, almost three thousand years, after the heavenly gift of alphabetical writing. But the progress which men make in valuable discoveries, is remarkable slow. Such discoveries are *rari nantes in gurgite vasto* few and far-between. That nearly three thousand years should have rolled over the whole literary world, employed for that long tract of years, in the laborious business of transcribing, without attaining the knowledge of this simple process for multiplying the products of mind, affords an additional argument in proof of the divine origin of the alphabet.

The invention of the art of printing was not the result of accident, as many fortunate discoveries in modern philosophy are but the offspring of the skilful application of mind. Laurent Coster, of Haerlem, a city of Holland, first invented types, which were cut in blocks of wood. They were at first rude, of course, and very imperfect. Soon after in the year 1440, John Guttemberg of Mentz, in Germany, improved on the discovery of Coster, by carving metallic types, which though superior to those of wood, were still very imperfect, as they were not of equal size. Schaefer perfected the invention at Strasbourgh, by casting types in an iron mould or matrix, engraved with a puncheon. The only addition which has been since made, is

the casting of immoveable types, or what we call stereotype plates. When once invented, the great importance of the art stimulated exertion, which soon brought it to perfection. The great advantage of this discovery is, that when the types are once set, a work indeed of considerable labor and much more tedious than writing, or when stereotype plates are cast, the copies of a work may be multiplied to any extent, with little more cost than that of the press work, and paper, and thus knowledge is rendered accessible to thousands, which before was confined to very few. Ten thousand persons, at the same moment may be employed in reading the same work, when formerly in most cases it would be read by one only at the same time. The price of ordinary books is now so much reduced, that the treasures of knowledge, which have been amassing for ages in all departments of science, are thrown open to all. Before the discovery of the art of printing, as books were accessible to but very few, so very few were furnished either with the means or the motive to learn to read; whereas now both may be furnished to all classes of society. A consequence too of the former scarcity and high price of books was, that the whole process of instruction, in all the schools was exceedingly tedious, operose and expensive, and thus the march of mind exceedingly retarded. Indeed it may be doubted whether in the absence of this art, it would be possible so to enlighten the great mass of any community, so as to render them capable of self-government, by the representative or republican form of government. It is by this happy device, we are persuaded, that all the nations of the earth will be enlightened in the rights of man, and in the true principles of governing commonwealths by the representatives of the peo-

ple. This salutary operation began to manifest, on a large scale, its effects, within about half a century after the discovery to which I allude,

(*To be continued.*)

Letter to the Editor.

REVIEW OF DONALDSON, ON COMMON MERCIES.

Sir, believing that your Magazine is calculated for the diffusion of truth, and the detection and exposure of error, I send you a few remarks on a late publication, entitled "Common Benefits not the purchase of Christ, &c. by John Donaldson, Minister of the Gospel," hoping they may be of use in counteracting the pernicious tendency of that publication, on a subject, which the writer does not seem to understand, and which he exceedingly abuses.

I have another reason, likewise, for taking notice of this author, in the way of animadversion, namely, to rescue from unjust odium and reproach, men, and religious bodies, dear to every real lover of Zion, whose names and characters it ill becomes a writer of this class, to treat as he has done.

You will be astonished, sir, to learn, if the pamphlet has not already reached you, that *John Donaldson*, has had the hardihood to attack John Owen, Thomas Boston, James Hervey, Ebenezer Erskine, the Associate Reformed Synod, the Associate Synod in America, the Reformed Synod in Scotland, and the Reformed Synod in the United States! Surely, this man is like Ishmael, *his hand is against every man.*

Now, sir, I have no small attachment to all these men and religious bodies, against whom this champion from the press at Steubenville, has entered the lists, and of whom it may be said, as was long ago said of another man of mighty dar-

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NO. IV.

BIBLE QUESTIONS FOR THE EVANGELICAL WITNESS.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 99.)

Q. 6th. What means 1. Cor. xv. 29. "Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" The subject of this chapter is the resurrection of the dead, which among other arguments, is proved from baptism. The verse affords several arguments.

A. Baptism is a washing of the body by the blood of Christ, sacramentally applied. But why apply the blood of Christ to the body, unless the body is purchased by his death? In this world it is subject to disease, at the termination of life, to death, and in the grave, to corruption. The bodies of the saints in this life have no visible prerogative over the bodies of the reprobate, one event happeneth to the bodies of the saints, and to the bodies of the ungodly—unbaptized reprobates. The advantage to the body, signified in baptism, must be realized in their resurrection.

Baptism seals the covenant connexion of the body with Christ. The body is a part of the person to which the blessings of the covenant of grace are sealed in baptism. "My covenant will I not

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(CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 113.)

As the mode of writing by alphabetical characters was at first consecrated to the holy purpose of recording the divine laws, so the art of printing was first employed in the multiplication of the copies of the Holy Scriptures. I do not speak of its application in its rude state, by Coster; for I have no documents by me recording the purposes to which he applied his moveable wooden types; but I refer to the use first made of the art as perfected by Schœfer: a copy of the Holy Scriptures was printed about the middle of the fifteenth century, in Germany. This was certainly an event of the utmost magnitude. The facilities of making extensively known to the public any work of interest, awakened an astonishing zeal in searching after, and bringing to light important works of antiquity. The Greek and Roman writers which had for ages been entombed in the cells of the monks, were rescued from oblivion, rapidly circulated, read with avidity, and studied by learned men in all nations. The family of the Medici in Italy, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, possessing great wealth and influence, were distinguished for their ardour and munificence in the recovery of ancient classical manuscripts. The liberal spirit which these writings breathe, and their republican principles, adorned with all the beauties and graces of style, were generally imbibed by the youth, in the learned institutions of all nations, where they were introduced and studied. And though they were heathens, yet their views of the rights of man are in-

comparably more enlightened, than many of those of European teachers and writers, who are called Christian doctors, and who have been the ignorant or interested panders of tyrannical power, and almost every where taught the most slavish doctrines: The effect produced by the classical writers of Grecian and Roman antiquity, could never have been accomplished but by the aid of the press. All this only paved the way for more powerful and more salutary movements in the public mind. Erasmus of Rotterdam availed himself of the Latin language, and the facilities of the press, to attack by the shafts of ridicule the reigning superstition, and priestly impositions and tyranny of the age. Errors and misrule which had for ages been held sacred by the ignorant populace; were unmasked and effectually exposed to public scorn. Thus were the foundations of systems of iniquity shaken. There immediately appeared in the firmament of the church men of gigantic mind, and endowed with the most invincible fortitude, to avail themselves for higher purposes of the stupendous powers of this new machine, which had already been wielded in spreading the doctrines of heathen sages, and in throwing the shafts of ridicule. Zuinglius in Switzerland, Luther in Germany, Calvin in Geneva, and Knox in Scotland, explored the treasures of sacred learning, developed the iniquities of the times, and the press soon teemed with their productions and those of their coadjutors. Luther translated the whole Bible into the vernacular language of Germany, the work was printed off, and circulated as fast as it could be prepared for the printers. The editions succeeded each other rapidly, and probably had a more powerful influence in accelerating and establishing the reformation, than all other causes together. The bulls of the Roman pontiff, the

imperial manifestos, the proceedings of the diets of empires, and of the conferences of the reformers and Roman Catholics, were all speedily issued from the press, and read with extraordinary eagerness by great multitudes, who had been already taught the art of reading, and who seemed to be introduced into a new world. The projects and the doings of the great officers of church and state were no longer confined to the knowledge of the few, but were read and scrutinized by the many. The press thus speedily became the vehicle of the learned, and earnest controversies of that remarkable age in religion, politics, and philosophy. New and wonderful vigour was infused into the investigations of scholars in every department of human knowledge, and a spirit of inquiry awakened, which produced on the whole face of society effects truly astonishing. The rapid diffusion of information on all subjects, especially on that of religion, exceeded all that had been witnessed in the antecedent generations of men. The number of books composed and printed, almost exceed belief. The larger works, and smaller tracts of Luther alone, which issued from the press, exceeded the number of eleven hundred. The works of Calvin, published in Latin, as collected after his death, fill no less than twelve huge folios. Holland, the cradle of the art of printing, was not behind other continental nations in the career of publishing books. To the knowledge which she thus diffused among her citizens, we trace, in a great measure, the partially republican form of government which she adopted, and for ninety years maintained at the point of the bayonet against the whole force of the Spanish empire; and wrested from her enemies the acknowledgment of her independent republic.

The rapidity of the change which took place in religion, fills our minds with astonishment. The

powers which Luther displayed in wielding this wonderful instrument, shook the throne of the Roman pontiff, and made the cardinals feel for their hats, and the bishop of Rome for his mitre. England, Scotland, Holland, Prussia, Sweden, Denmark, almost the half of Germany, Geneva, many of the Swiss cantons, and four millions of the citizens of France, embraced the Protestant faith, in about half a century. Such were the prodigies which these little metallic types were the instruments of working within less than one hundred and fifty years after their invention. They made the discoveries of almost every individual, the common property of all civilized nations.

It is not to be disguised, indeed, that very great evils have resulted from the abuse of this discovery. ^{While} ~~While~~ pure religion and sound philosophy instructed their children in all that is excellent from the press, it has also teemed with the productions of superstition, idolatry, error, and folly. But even this was overruled for good. The conflict with the new weapons which were furnished, on the great theatre of the world, invigorated genius, sharpened invention, and aroused the friends of truth to mightier efforts; religious truth was ably vindicated, and reason triumphed over folly.

In our own age, we derive advantages from this art, of which we are perhaps little aware, and of which we ought to be well apprized, that they may not be lost.

The illustration of all the advantages of the art of printing in our own times, would embrace almost every important object of human thought, investigation, and business. They all employ the press, as the great engine, by which individuals, churches, and nations are moved. It is impossible to conceive the revolution which would soon

take place in the whole state of society over the civilized world, were the press annihilated. The great enterprises of the nations, and of social institutions, would be checked in their career. Mercantile affairs are guided by the press. Advices from foreign nations of the prices of commodities, and of the state of the markets at home, are communicated through this channel, and it even furnishes the circulating medium, as the representative of property. In the present extended complex state of trade, the advertising columns of newspapers, are essentially necessary to the successful transaction of business, and have become the great commercial theatre of the world.

In the business of civil government, what of importance is, or can be accomplished without the instrumentality of the art of printing? It is hardly conceivable, that the memorable revolution, by which our own country became an independent nation, could ever have been effected, unless the public mind had been awakened, enlightened, and stimulated to vigorous and persevering action by the light which it shed upon society at large, and the enthusiastic ardour which it kindled in the bosoms of the people. All the wealth, all the knowledge, all the comfort which flow from that memorable revolution, and all the increase of our population may be traced to its beneficent influence. Little did Coster think, when carving his wooden types, that he was furnishing the means of stupendous revolutions, of amplifying the wealth of the world, and of adding millions to its population. If it were necessary to the gaining of our independence, and to the establishment of our republican forms of government, it is no less so to their preservation. When men assert that because former republics have passed away and degenerated into despotisms, ours must also fall;

they forget the influence of the press upon the present state of the world. We have, indeed, the same corruptions of human nature, the same ambitious thirst for power, the same disregard of the rights of men, and the same intriguing spirit to contend with in our own times and country, which in past ages accomplished the ruin of partially organized republics. But we have the means to expose them, and the very dread of this exposure imposes upon them a salutary check. In order, however, to render this effectual, our citizens must know the extent of their means, and improve them by reading. The press may indeed become partially venal and corrupted, but as the interest of the great mass of the people always is to preserve their liberties, this corruption can hardly ever become general, absolutely, *never*, if the people will read and reflect. This reading must not be confined to the periodical journals issued daily, weekly, or monthly, it must extend to other times and countries, that we may learn by the experience, profit by the wisdom, and be taught to avoid the errors of past generations. Then should the press ever become venal, we will be able to correct the evil. Neither books nor periodical journals will be printed unless they are bought, they will not be bought unless they are read, and they will neither be bought nor read generally, unless they are approved; and a well informed people will not approve what is calculated to destroy their rights, and reduce them to a state of slavery. In the midst of a people thus informed, and who read and scrutinize, there is nothing which ambitious and corrupt men more dread than the exposure of their corruption to the sight of an indignant people. I do apprehend that the ambitious designs of profligate men cannot long escape the scrutiny and reprobation of any people who read so much

as those of the United States. Allow me to add, that this spirit of inquiry and taste for reading must be diffused, generally among our farmers and the labouring classes of the community, in order to produce its full effect. They constitute the great mass of society, form its strength, and are less liable to be biassed by ambitious and mischievous projects, than any other portion of our citizens.

But in directing your attention to the political powers of the press, in this age, we must not confine our views to our own country. We trace to their operations the salutary changes which have recently taken place on the continent of South America. Before the time of Coster's invention, our revolution might have remained for the past half century almost unknown among the South Americans, at least its nature and causes. Why have our doings become known, and produced effects so important in so short a period? Because this is a printing and a reading age. What has awaked the spirit of liberty in Greece, and enabled them to sustain themselves in five campaigns against the whole power of the Ottoman empire, which was formerly the terror of all Europe, and against the ill will and sinister intrigues of the surrounding monarchies? It is public sentiment, created by the press. She has uttered her loud, distinct, and warning voice in favour of the rights of man. The people of Greece have heard it, and have been animated and cheered in their noble efforts: tyrants too have heard it, trembled, and stood still. The press sounds the trumpet of liberty, and summons the nations to arise and assert their rights, and all shall hear and obey.

But accompany me for a moment into the department of literature, the home of the press. Here your common schools are all under her control. She furnishes your children with all the im-

plements of learning, and holds up to their youthful minds the lights of knowledge. On the subjects of grammar, geography, and history, the child of ten years old may be familiar with truths of which ancient sages and monarchs were ignorant. Here she puts the key of knowledge into the hands of the child, and teaches him to unlock its treasures. But in order to avail yourselves of the advantages which in this respect the press brings to the door of every citizen, you must yourselves read, that the blessings provided for your children, may be realized in the proper culture of their youthful intellects; otherwise you are constantly liable to be imposed upon by ignorant pretenders, who will be ever ready to thrust themselves into your schools, and mar the education of your offspring. We hear many complaints that the munificent provision made by this state for the education of her sons, does not produce more speedy and abundant fruits. Its operation must be gradual. Great and lasting benefits will only be realized by the creation of a general taste for reading, and demanding by law, moral qualifications of teachers. Of what avail is it to be taught to read, if children have not access to books, and how shall they have this, unless furnished by parents? Expenditures for this purpose will never be made by the heads of families, until they themselves taste the pleasure, and know the profit to be derived from books.

But let us ascend into the higher departments of literature. The press infuses into them much of their life and vigour. She furnishes them with their classic poets, statesmen, historians, and philosophers, and with the modern works of taste, morals, and science; and presents to our youth the treasures of learning, which have been accumulating in all ages and nations. The facilities afforded by the press

in the prosecution of all liberal studies are inestimable. In order to be well assured that all this is not a dream of fancy, we must read and learn to appreciate the powers which learning and learned men bring to bear upon human society, and discover that learned institutions are to be fostered by public sentiment and public liberality, as sources of national wealth, national greatness, and national dignity. We should ever remember that the mighty engine which we now contemplate, must, from the nature of the case, be chiefly committed to the management of those who are educated in the higher walks of literature.

As the last topic, suffer me to remind you that the effects of this art are as conspicuous in the all important affairs of religion, as in any of the other departments to which you have been referred. The multiplication of the copies of the Scriptures ought here to occupy the first place. There was a time in the history of the church (I refer to the reign of Josiah) when it seems^r there was not known to exist a single copy of the law; at least when one was found, all were astonished at its contents, of which the king, the priests, and the people had but a very imperfect knowledge. In ages long after, it was impossible for every Christian congregation to be furnished with a copy of the Bible; indeed, it never was within the reach of all worshipping assemblies, before it was supplied from the press. It is easy to conceive the state of Christian knowledge, or rather of ignorance, when the fountain of divine truth was so difficult of access by the multitude. When copies of the divine word were so rare, other religious books must have been still rarer.

How different the age in which we live! The very cheapest book in the world is the Bible, and "hardly one so poor," if he has the inclination, as not to be able to purchase a copy. Beside the

large sales of this blessed book effected by individual merchants, Bible Societies in their extended and powerful operations, are all furnished with the only means by which they can exert their energies, through the medium of the press. She is thus employed in evangelizing the nations, at the very same moment that she pleads so effectually for the cause of civil liberty, that while men are inducted into their rights as citizens, they may be prepared for the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

By the same means, the labours of great and good men, in the illustration and defence of the sacred volume, are made the common property of the church, and will ere long become the common property of the whole earth. The history of the church in ample volumes, recording the doings of the church's Head, and the labours of his servants in all ages, has issued from the press. The treasures of divine truth thus amassed, exceed all estimate, furnishing a stock upon which Christians may draw in all future ages. The formularies of sound doctrine, the rules of ecclesiastical order, catechetical manuals for the instruction of youth and age, are placed by the press within the reach of every family, and furnish to parents and ministers the greatest facilities for the communication of knowledge to those placed under their care. By means of the art of printing, the waters of the river of life, derived from the sacred fountain, are flowing along thousands of channels to convey fertilization, life and health to every household, and to all nations. It is true, that the effects of all this have not yet developed themselves, and that the powers of darkness are exerting all their energies to prevent the expected good. It will be in vain. But what will all this avail, unless men read? The Bible will not profit unless

it is read; commentaries will not profit unless they are read; nor will catechisms and other formularies profit unless they are perused and studied.

In selecting a topic for your entertainment, and addressing motives to the members of this institution, to encourage effort, and awaken a spirit of liberal curiosity, which seeks its gratification in reading, I have preferred those details to a laboured argument on behalf of the institution. I might have descanted on the profitable and pleasant results of time spent in well selected reading; on the vigour which it imparts to intellect; on the fine sentiments which it cherishes; on the qualifications which it imparts for all the active duties of public life; and on the exquisite gratification which is enjoyed in holding conversation with the great and good of the illustrious dead, and with the living sages of distant lands. I might have depicted the wretched debility of ignorance, and demonstrated the impossibility of attaining to great usefulness or eminence, without much reading. I might have proved that every man who has a taste for good books, can find considerable time for its gratification. I might have enforced the necessity of cherishing such an institution as this, by a reference to the state of this flourishing village, which will soon exert a powerful influence on the surrounding population. All this I leave for you to infer, from the historical sketch to which you have been attending; or rather, (should I not say?) all this I omit, because it must already be familiar to you. Let us every one according to our opportunities, improve the advice of Paul to Timothy, "Give thyself unto reading."